



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



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M.J. "Mike" Foster
Governor

Contact Jim Friloux for more information: (225) 765-0735; e-mail: jim_f@deq.state.la.us

J. Dale Givens
Secretary

Ozone Season Begins; DEQ to Post Daily Readings

(Baton Rouge) – The 2002 Ozone Season officially begins on May 1 and will end September 30. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will again post hourly ozone readings and forecasts on its Internet web site throughout this period -- http://www.deq.state.la.us/evaluation/ozone/oz_today.asp. In addition, DEQ will once again record daily ozone forecasts and daily air quality readings. Residents may obtain this information by dialing 225/765-2660 (Ozone Forecasts) and 225-765-2592 (Daily Air Quality Index Readings).

Ozone forms when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides react in the presence of sunlight and warm temperatures on days with little or no wind. While ozone in the earth's upper atmosphere helps protect us from the sun's harmful rays, ground-level ozone is potentially harmful to human health. Ozone is one of six criteria pollutants for which ambient air standards have been established. Louisiana currently meets federal air quality standards for all criteria pollutants in all areas of the state except East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Iberville, Ascension and Livingston parishes, which have been classified as an ozone non-attainment area.

This is the second year that all state agencies are required to file an Ozone Action Plan as a result of an Executive Order from Governor Mike Foster. The agencies' plans list steps that the agency employees will be urged to take to limit ozone-producing activities on those days when unhealthy levels of ozone are forecast. DEQ will notify state agency contacts when such "Ozone Action Days" are forecast.

Residents in the Baton Rouge area are urged to limit driving and limit use of fuels and solvents on those days when ozone levels are "unhealthy". In general, when ozone levels are high, residents should also limit outdoor activities, which increase exposure to ozone. People at highest health risk are those with asthma and those with heart or lung diseases. Children and the elderly are also at higher risk.

To help prevent the formation of ozone, area residents are encouraged to take one or more of the following voluntary actions:

- Limit daytime driving and combine errands. Drive "emissionwise." Avoid prolonged idling and jackrabbit starts. Walk or ride a bicycle for short trips.
- Carpool or ride public transportation when possible.
- Refuel your vehicle in the cooler evening hours. Don't top off your tank.
- Defer mowing grass until late evening or the next day.
- Avoid use of all gasoline-powered equipment --chain saws, garden equipment, outboard motors, off-road or other recreational vehicles. If you must use such equipment, wait until after 7 p.m.
- Postpone chores that use oil-based paints, varnishes and solvents that produce fumes.
- If you must barbecue, use an electric starter instead of starter fluid.
- Maintain your vehicle to minimize pollutant emissions and maintain fuel efficiency.
- Make certain your gas cap seals tightly. If it is missing, buy a new one.
- Conserve energy in your home.
- Spread the word by telling family, friends, co-workers and neighbors about ozone action days.

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